



## **Language regulation in collaborative student writing**

### **A case study**

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## Language Regulation in Collaborative Student Writing: A Case Study

The article provides a micro-analytical perspective on processes of collaborative writing among university students at an international BA programme in Denmark, investigating the extent to which language regulation takes place as part of the students' joint writing activities and exploring the language ideological underpinnings of such regulatory practices. Four overall analytical observations are made concerning the practices of the group: 1) Writing is a multilingual process; 2) Written products are monolingual; 3) Language regulation rarely concerns form; 4) Getting the message across is key. These findings are discussed in relation to existing findings in the literature and related to the topic of university language policy.

Keywords: language regulation; collaborative writing; university internationalization

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### **Introduction**

In recent decades, the field of applied linguistics has witnessed an increase in research devoted to the cultural, linguistic and educational consequences of university internationalization in Europe, particularly in relation to the introduction of English as a medium of instruction (EMI). However, one aspect that to some extent remains underexplored in the literature is how the introduction of EMI relates to the sociolinguistics of academic writing (cf. Lillis 2013), particularly from a student perspective. The present article addresses one aspect of this issue by providing a micro-analytical perspective on processes of collaborative writing among university students at an international study programme at a Danish University. Based on video recordings of an undergraduate student project group, the paper presents an analysis of cases where co-production of written language is in evidence. The analysis explores the extent to which language regulation (Hynninen 2013) or language policing (Blommaert et al. 2009) takes place in the group as part of the students' joint writing activities and discusses the language ideological assumptions these practices may be based on. I conclude the article by briefly linking the analysis and discussion to wider debates at the interface of language ideology and language policy in the context of university internationalization in the Nordic countries, Denmark in particular. I suggest that empirical studies of language practices 'on the ground', such as the study presented in this article,

challenge the assumptions underlying current university language policies, highlighting a need for more dynamic language policies which can embrace the (latent) linguistic diversity which characterizes international higher education, but which is at present not fully exploited as a resource for learning.

## **Background to the study**

The increased use of English as a medium of instruction in higher education has raised considerable debate in the Nordic countries in the public domain as well as in the scholarly literature. Discussions have concerned the status of the local languages vs. English (Preisler, Klitgård & Fabricius 2011; Haberland & Mortensen 2012; Dimova, Hultgren & Jensen 2015), as well as the perceived ‘quality’ of English being used. In Denmark, local as well as transnational university students have been accused of having inferior English language skills, speaking and writing what has been referred to as *circus English* (see discussion of this label in Mortensen 2008). In the Swedish context, Airey (2009) has shown that the use of English as a medium of instruction can be challenging to students who do not have English as their first language, and lecturers have also been found to be challenged by institutional requirements to teach in English (Preisler 2014). Despite these well-known problems associated with the use of English as a foreign language in higher education, Nordic universities have generally not refrained from expanding their use of English medium instruction. EMI continues to be on the rise, and the critical voices which tended to dominate the public debate in the beginning of the millennium are starting to be challenged by practitioners and scholars who argue that the kind of English being used at Nordic universities, although clearly different from the kinds of English spoken in inner circle countries, is nevertheless fully sufficient and indeed appropriate for the purposes of ‘international’ education.

What we see is a tension between different language ideological positions. In somewhat simplified terms, we can identify a purist, standard language-oriented stance which is positioned in opposition to a more pragmatic stance emphasizing communicative efficiency over formal correctness. This language ideological opposition is first and foremost discernable in the public debate, but it is arguably ‘refracted’ (Irvine and Gal 2000) at other levels of societal organization and in many different contexts as well. One such place is the scholarly literature where traditional approaches to the teaching of English as a foreign language are being challenged by more recent

‘ELF’ approaches which value communicative effectiveness in the use of English as a lingua franca (cf. Seidlhofer 2011; see also Mauranen 2012 and Jenkins 2014 for work that focuses on the use of English in the context of higher education). The different positions are also present among students. In a small-scale interview study published in 2014, Anne Fabricius and I found that the interviewed students valued communicative effectiveness higher than a particular English accent when asked whether ‘it matters what accent people have’ in the context of an international study programme at a Danish university (Mortensen and Fabricius 2014). Similarly, in Mortensen (2014) I presented data which illustrated how local and transnationally mobile students at an international study programme in Denmark have a quite flexible approach to their use of linguistic resources in student group work, effortlessly and unremarkably engaging in interactive practices which involve the combination of various styles of English and multiple languages. In the data I investigated, being able to speak a *particular* kind of ‘standard’-like English did not seem to be a prerequisite for being a legitimate participant. Linguistic differences were obviously socially significant in the groups, for instance in the constitution of functional group roles (cf. Mortensen 2010), but there was no automatic correlation between commanding a particular variety of English and social status in the groups.

It is tempting to suggest that findings like these (and others like them, e.g. Kuteeva et al. 2015) indicate that we are witnessing an emancipation from the shackles of monolingual standard language ideology in the use of English as a lingua franca in ‘the international university’. However, the picture is not quite as simple as that. Mortensen and Fabricius (2014) *also* find that their interviewees subscribe to language ideologies that clearly favor ‘native’ over ‘local’ ways of speaking English, and students in Mortensen (2014) are *also* found to engage in language regulating behavior, on occasion insisting on the adoption of a more ‘pure’ code (which in this case means ‘English only’). Karakaş (2015) finds similar double-sided orientations to English amongst university students in Turkey, Wang (2013) documents a very similar tension between ‘endonormative’ and ‘exonormative’ orientations to norms of English amongst Chinese university students and Chinese professionals, and McKenzie and Gilmore (2017) report very similar findings from a study of Japanese university students’ perceptions of various forms of English. In other words, research on attitudes to English in EMI contexts (and beyond, cf. Baird and Baird 2017) suggest that the emancipation from a monolingual standard language ideology may not be that advanced after all – or at least not as straightforward as it might seem at first

glance. In some respects, university students who use English for the purposes of education may be seen as – and see themselves as – ‘ELF users’, championing their right to use English as they see fit, in combination with other languages, but in other respects, they are quite conservative, insisting on values that we tend to associate with monolingual standard language ideologies. As such, they can be said to orient quite flexibly to what Lillis has referred to as different ‘evaluative regimes’ (2013: 98).

Hynninen (2016) has identified a similar duality in the practice of language regulation in relation to the use of English as a lingua franca in Finnish higher education. By ‘language regulation’ Hynninen refers to speakers’ ‘language-regulatory practices of monitoring and intervening in language use’ (2016: 10) which amounts to a ‘discursive practice through which ... norms are reproduced and ignored, and through which alternative [norms] emerge’ (2016: 30). Such processes of language regulation may be seen in relation to the broader notion of language policing, defined as ‘the production of “order” – normatively organized and policed conduct – which is infinitely detailed and regulated by a variety of actors’ (Blommaert et al. 2009: 203). Interestingly, Hynninen finds language regulation in her data mainly to be directed at written language, and less frequently spoken language (2016: 178). This suggests that language ideological orientations may differ according to the communicative mode of interaction, specifically written vs. spoken discourse (which is also a point made by Karakas 2015). It is this hypothesis which I set out to explore in this article, by investigating the stances that students take up in relation to written language as opposed to spoken language in group-based project work.

## **Data and research interests**

The data analyzed in the following come from a corpus of video recordings of student project group meetings at a Danish university which I collected from 2007 to 2008 as part of my PhD project (Mortensen 2010: 108), and which also formed the basis of the study reported in Mortensen (2014). Apart from my own work on the data set, the data have been explored by other researchers affiliated with the CALPIU Research Centre at Roskilde University (Day and Kjærbeck 2008, 2011; Kristiansen 2015, 2017). The investigation of the data, my own as well as that of others, has overwhelmingly concerned the use of spoken language as part of social interaction. Kristiansen, working from the perspective of ethnomethodological conversation analysis, also takes an interest in the relationship between spoken and written language. She has

identified a recurring phenomenon in the data she calls ‘writing aloud voice’ (WAV) sequences, in which participants as part of their spoken discourse present candidate formulations for written text. Such WAV sequences, she explains, can ‘be heard as the speaker’s performance of an act of composition: in and through WAV sequences, speakers demonstrate their ability to create a piece of text ...’ which ‘displays the speaker’s knowledge and understanding of the subject matter ... as well as their mastery of relevant conventions for writing’ (Kristiansen 2017: 62). The analysis I present in the following builds on the insights generated by Kristiansen and seeks to add a further perspective by incorporating an interest in what happens in the ‘actual’ process of writing – the symbolic representation of language achieved by ‘putting pen to paper’ or, in this case, by writing on a whiteboard and typing letters on a computer screen.

The analysis focuses on an extended sequence of collaborative writing which takes place at one of the meetings in the data set. This meeting is not included in Mortensen (2014), but it forms the basis of Kristiansen’s (2017) account of the WAV sequence phenomenon. The meeting has a total duration of approximately two hours and 20 minutes, and the sequence under analysis is about an hour long. The sequence is launched by Ernst who asks his fellow group members (Marie, Louise and Jesper) whether they consider it feasible that they can formulate their ‘problem’ in the 30 minutes or so that he estimates remain at the meeting at this point. The sequence turns out to be longer than 30 minutes. In fact, the group’s collaborative work on the formulation only comes to an end approximately 53 minutes later, with Jesper making an evaluative remark as he finishes writing on the whiteboard (represented in Extract 6 in the analysis). Table 1 gives an overview of the group members, while Figure 1 gives an impression of the locale and the position of the participants.

Table 1: The group members (represented by pseudonyms).  
Note that Peter is not present during the sequence analyzed in this article.<sup>1</sup>

Name	Gender	Age	First language
Ernst	Male	21	German
Jesper	Male	23	Danish
Louise	Female	21	Danish
Marie	Female	22	Danish
Peter	Male	23	English

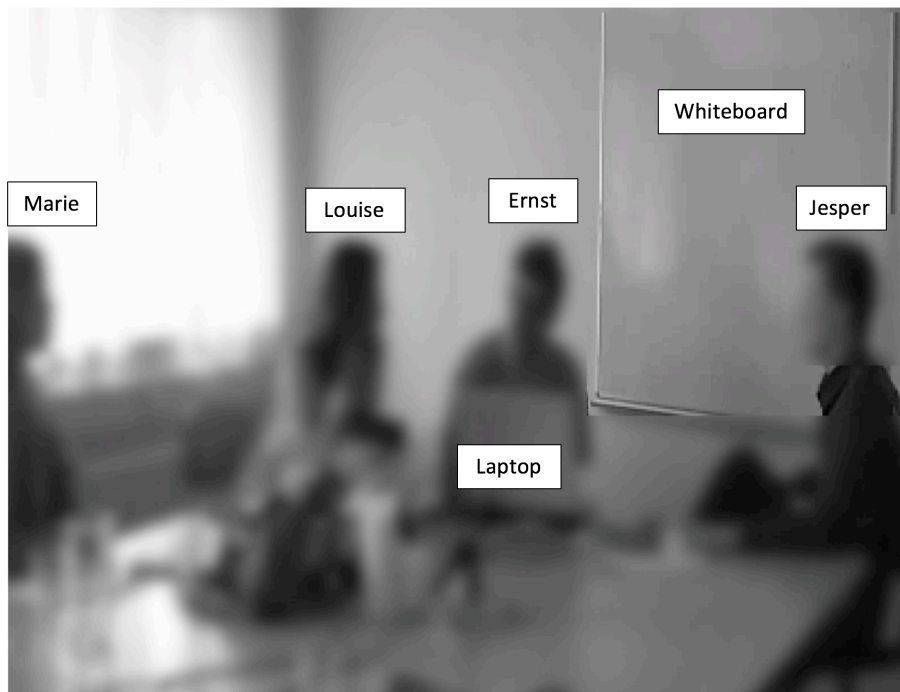


Figure 1: Anonymized screenshot from the video, showing the initial positions of the participants and the layout of the room

In my analysis of the sequence, I have been guided by two overall questions: 1) To what extent do the students engage in language regulation during their joint writing activity? 2) What language ideological principles (if any) may the identified regulation practices be suggested to be based on? By focusing on a single extended sequence, I have been able to pursue these questions in considerable detail as part of what I consider an explorative case study. Where relevant, the analysis draws on analyses I have conducted of the data set in other contexts, but the remit of the analysis is limited to the single sequence delineated above. This approach obviously prevents me from making general claims about the full data set, but I believe the observations I present below may provide a useful starting point for more extensive studies of the way students engage in language regulation as part of collaborative writing processes, and the language ideological orientations underlying their practices.



## Analysis

My account of the data is structured around four analytical observations: 1) Writing is a multilingual process; 2) Written products are monolingual; 3) Language regulation rarely concerns form; 4) Getting the message across is key. The two first themes concern questions of language choice while themes 3 and 4 concern the way the group members orient to what is considered acceptable, appropriate or functional when it comes to the use of English in the group context. In the following I will deal with the observations in turn before bringing the points together in the discussion.

### *Writing is a multilingual process*

In line with the multilingual practices I have observed in other groups (Mortensen 2014), the students in this group are quite liberal in the way they mobilize and deploy linguistic resources from various languages as part of their collaboration. English is the dominating ‘matrix language’ but other languages are also used, and most of the time this passes without the participants displaying any orientation to this sort of language mixing as deviant. Extract 1 is a case in point. In this sequence, Ernst is working on formulating ‘the second part’ of the formulation of the group’s overall research ‘problem’, which will eventually form the basis of their small-scale collaborative research project.

#### Extract 1

1	Ernst	and then the second part (0.6)	
2		erm contrasting to that	
3		(1.4)	
4		the time (.) er the basic pedagogical ideas (0.6)	
5		prevailed (0.9)	
6		until two thousand and seven or until today (0.5)	
7		erm (0.5)	
8		alt[ʃsɑ]	
9	Louise	lpre vailed hvad betyder det	<i>what does that mean</i>
10	Ernst	sæt- er sætter sig igennem	<i>as- er assert themselves</i>
11		(0.8)	
12		altså (0.5)	<i>I mean</i>
13		er der stadigvæk i dag ≈	<i>are still there today</i>
14	Jesper	≈ at at de v- de vund-	<i>that they w- they won</i>
15		eller de har overlevet	<i>or they have survived</i>
16		på en eller anden måde	<i>some how</i>
17		at de er ikke gået væk	<i>they haven't gone away</i>
18	Louise	okay?	
19		(0.7)	

The extract begins by Ernst (standing next to the whiteboard) paraphrasing/explaining what he has just written on the whiteboard to his left. In line 9, Louise (seated right next to Ernst) displays trouble in understanding one of the words used by Ernst (*prevail*). Interestingly, her question is phrased in Danish, and Ernst accepts this change of medium without further ado by providing an immediate clarification of the term in Danish, in collaboration with Jesper (seated to his left), who also uses Danish. In moving effortlessly between the two languages in this way, the participants do not seem to be making any clear or principled distinction between the use of English and the use of Danish. In effect, they may be said to use Danish and English in conjunction as one ‘code’ or as what Gafaranga and Torras call a ‘bilingual medium’ (2001). No language regulation is being enacted here.

What is not immediately apparent from Extract 1 is that Ernst, who is a transnational student from Germany, is in fact using *prevail* as an English equivalent for the German expression ‘*sich durchsetzen*’. That this is the case can be substantiated by looking at the interaction leading up to the exchange represented in Extract 1. The word *prevail* is first used – by Ernst – 18 minutes before the exchange in Extract 1 takes place. While the others have been discussing, Ernst has been busy at this laptop, after which he gets up and starts writing silently on the whiteboard. At one point, he then interrupts the discussion between the other members, as represented in Extract 2, from line 3 onwards.

#### Extract 2

1	Marie	what is (.) standing right here is very much about
2		「xxx」
3	Ernst	lokay」
4	Marie	but okay ((gesturing to Ernst at the whiteboard))
5		(0.6)
6	Ernst	should we start out with the first preproposal
7		concerning that Uni X (0.6)
8		erm I mean we assume that Uni X is (0.5)
9		erm (0.5)
10		based on a certain pedagogical (0.4)
11		er (.) well on certain pedagogical ideas (0.5)
12		er which haven't changed from back then till today
13		I think that's something that should be ≈
14	Louise	≈ yeah I 「think」
15	Ernst	ler」 (0.2) or that that have actually
16		(0.8) ((Ernst leans forward, looking at his laptop))
17		e:rm
18		(1.0)
19		e:r
20		prevailed ((Ernst moves away from laptop, looking at Louise))
21		(3.0) ((Ernst and Jesper produce collaborative laughter))
22	Ernst	from (.) erm nineteen seventy-two until today

In lines 15 to 20, Ernst is quite literally engaged in a word-searching process. Even though it is impossible to ascertain exactly what he is doing or looking for as he leans forward to look at his laptop (line 16 onwards), the ‘prevailed’ he produces in line 20 is styled in a way that indicates that he ‘found what he was looking for’, giving the impression that he may have been looking for the word in some of his notes on the laptop, or possibly an electronic dictionary.

Approximately 10 minutes after the exchange represented in Extract 2, Ernst asks Jesper for help in remembering the English word for the German ‘durchsetzen’. This exchange is transcribed in Extract 3. As the extract begins, Ernst is standing at the whiteboard again while Jesper is sitting next to it, with Ernst’s laptop on his lap. Marie and Louise are a little further away, engaged in another conversation (not transcribed here).

### Extract 3

1 Ernst do you still have the word (.) for (.) durchsetzen  
2 Jesper ehr yeah (.) ehr prevail  
3 I can remember it but I can also check it  
4 prevail  
5 depends on I mean durchsetzen is translated to a lot of different  
6 things Ernst  
7 Ernst yeah yeah ((in a Danish-sounding pronunciation))  
8 Jesper there is do you want me to name all of them  
9 Ernst er no just the one hvor der står *sich* durchsetzen  
10 Jesper xxx *sich* durchsetzen to prevail  
11 Ernst *just the one hvor jeg står sich durchsetzen*  
12 Jesper *yeah haha*  
14 Ernst what a sentence  
15 Jesper yeah  
16 Ernst haha  
17 Jesper e:rm (.) to prevail  
18 (1.0)  
19 Jesper but I would say I would say that is not the correct word to use  
20 I would say to erm (3.5)  
21 yeah no to prevail is a good (0.6)  
22 Ernst *haha* ≈  
23 Jesper ≈ that's a good verb (.) use that

The exchange in Extract 3 allows us to infer that what Ernst was doing previously when he looked at his laptop (in Extract 2 and the sequence leading up to that) was to find an English equivalent for the German expression ‘sich durchsetzen’.

Two further aspects of Extracts 3 and 2 are worthy of comment in the context of the analysis that I am pursuing here. First, it is noteworthy that Ernst apparently considers it relevant

– or perhaps necessary, even – to find an English equivalent for the German expression he has in mind before sharing it with the group. Judging by his contributions in Extract 3, Jesper seems to be fully capable of understanding the German expression (which incidentally also has a near cognate in Danish, ‘sætte igennem’ or ‘at sætte sig igennem’) so in principle Ernst could just have used the German word. It is, of course, possible that Louise and Marie would not be able to follow Ernst if he used the German expression (the data does not really tell us whether this is the case or not), and this could be one reason for why he goes to some length to find an English expression (which, ironically, turns out to cause problems as well, as we saw in Extract 1). However, another possible reason for the need to have the expression in English is that this word is specifically called upon to fill a role in the formulation of the problem that Ernst is in the process of writing on the board. As I return to below, there is a very strong preference in the group for using English (and English only) when it comes to written language, despite the fact that the spoken mode is clearly multilingual.

The other point which is worthy of comment is the way Ernst and Jesper orient to the utterance that Ernst produces in line 9, ‘er no just the one hvor der står *sich* durchsetzen’ (‘hvor der står’ = *where it says*). By repeating this utterance in line 11 while producing laughter, Ernst can be seen to offer a meta-comment on his own ‘mixing’ of languages. The use of a bilingual (or trilingual) medium is in this case – as opposed to the case we saw in Extract 1 – oriented to as somehow ‘deviant’. It is striking, though, that although the utterance may be laughable (as evidenced by Ernst’s own production and Jesper’s uptake in lines 12 and 15 which also contains laughter), it is not treated as reprehensible or sanctionable behavior. This suggests that there is a considerable tolerance towards linguistic pluralism in the spoken interaction among the group members. As I will show in the next section this is in stark contrast to their collaborative production of written language where there is a much stricter orientation towards English as a monolingual medium.

### *Written products are monolingual*

All written products that emerge as part of the sequence are in English. In other words, everything the group members put on the whiteboard (see Figure 1) during the meeting is written in English – as far as the video recording allows me to see. Even though it is not explicitly discussed among the members that this should be so, this practice clearly amounts to a case of

implicit language regulation, which stands out compared to the multilingual practices that otherwise characterize the interaction. Why is this so? One obvious reason concerns the institutional setting of the interaction. The students are not simply producing this text for their own benefit, they are in fact preparing the text for their supervisor – an outsider or a member of an overhearing audience in Bell's (1984, 2001) framework of audience design. This orientation is made explicit very early on, in fact even before Ernst proposes that the group should try to formulate their problem. It is Jesper who brings up the supervisor in the way represented in Extract 4 where 'John' is a pseudonym for the supervisor's real name.

#### Extract 4

- |   |        |  |
|---|--------|--|
| 1 | Jesper | John (.) actually last time we wrote him I       |
| 2 |        | with that sketch we made                         |
| 3 |        | I sent it to him and he said it's fine           |
| 4 |        | he has a lot of good comments #but# as he said   |
| 5 |        | remember to formulate your problem at some point |
| 6 | Ernst  | oh yeah  |

The group then goes on to discussing how it would be preferable to get the supervisor's comments for the 'problem formulation' before their internal midterm evaluation, and this concern indeed seems to be the reason why it is relevant for Ernst to ask whether the group should try to formulate their problem in the 30 minutes or so that remain of the meeting.

Unlike the ongoing spoken interaction, which only concerns the group members in attendance, the problem formulation – a written text – is not merely produced for the benefit of those present. By virtue of being transportable in time and space (Haberland and Mortensen 2016), the text has a wider potential audience – in this case involving the group's supervisor – and the members seem to orient to this fact.

In Denmark, being enrolled in an 'international' study programme is often seen as being equivalent to being enrolled in an English medium programme (and vice versa). From that perspective, the exclusive use of English that the group adopts here in their written text production makes perfect sense (although the educational programme in question did in fact not, at the time the data was collected, have an official 'English-only' language policy, cf. Mortensen 2014). The very act of using of English helps establish the legitimacy of the text in its institutional context. The students are likely to assume that this is the language that their supervisor expects to receive their text in. It is interesting to note, however, that the choice of

English, if it is indeed prompted by an implicit understanding that the supervisor is the ultimate recipient of the text, must be seen as orienting to the *institutional role* of the supervisor rather than the supervisor as an individual. In the same way as the group members, including Ernst and Peter, the supervisor is perfectly capable of using Danish as well as English as a working language, being a Danish L1 speaker and a fluent speaker of English. So, the insistence on using English is not caused by limitations in his linguistic repertoire (or the repertoire of the group members for that matter), but rather seems to be premised on situated and unspoken institutional expectations concerning the appropriate language for a text of the type the group is producing.

*Language regulation rarely concerns form*

As has been illustrated in the two first sections of the analysis, the linguistic practices of the group are characterized by a fascinating mix between a flexible orientation towards the use of linguistic resources in spoken interaction, and a restrictive orientation towards English as the only permissible language in the written mode. Across the written and the spoken mode, it is interesting to note that language regulation practices which target language *form* are virtually non-existent. In fact, in the spoken mode I have been unable to find examples of explicit language regulation which targets linguistic form. In the written mode there is one obvious example which is represented in Extract 5.

#### Extract 5

1	Jesper	should I try to put it like this (1.5)
2		((MAR and LOU talking to each other throughout))
3	Ernst	does the five
4		(0.5)
5		do the five not does the five
6	Jesper	oh yeah that's #right#
7		do the five concepts work and will (1.2)

In line 2, Ernst begins to read out loud what Jesper has just written on the whiteboard, but as the transcript shows, he stops after only three words, ‘does the five’. He then launches what may be heard as a correction, ‘do the five, not does the five’, in which he attends to subject-verb agreement, correcting the ‘non-standard’ combination of a semantic plural subject and a verb form in the singular. Jesper’s uptake in lines 6 and 7 confirms that Ernst’s contribution is heard as a correction, further supported by the fact that he wipes the letters ‘does’ from the whiteboard and replaces them by ‘do’. This brief exchange, then, amounts to a clear example of language

regulation, specifically a process through which speakers reproduce pre-existing language norms (cf. Hynninen 2013).

In analyses of the use of English as a lingua franca, the (s) variable has often been singled out as one of the areas in which lingua franca users of English happily ignore ‘standard rules’ by omitting the third person present tense singular -s in contexts where it is prescribed in ‘standard’ varieties of English (see e.g. Seidlhofer 2004, Cogo and Dewey 2006 and Breiteneder 2005; for discussion see Mortensen 2013). Something similar is arguably the case in the data under analysis here where the use of so-called ‘non-standard’ grammar is a regular feature of the interaction, but also a strikingly unremarkable feature which the participants themselves do not, as a general rule, attend to. The exchange in Extract 5 is the exception, not the rule. In understanding why ‘grammar’ is suddenly important here (but not elsewhere) it is obvious to point to the mode of discourse (spoken vs. written) and the intended audience of the language being produced (group members only vs. outsiders). The underlying language ideological assumption here seems to be that, in this context (in which we traditionally find a strong emphasis on formality and correctness in writing), there are different standards of appropriateness for written and spoken language – different evaluative regimes (Lillis 2013) at work.

Another assumption possibly guiding the interaction between Ernst and Jesper is that ‘common’ linguistic products, i.e. language that is collaboratively produced within the group and which represents the group as a whole rather than a single group member, are open to joint scrutiny. The unmitigated style that Ernst adopts in correcting Jesper’s proposal and the no-nonsense approach Jesper’s displays in rectifying the problem without further ado seems to suggest that the correction of formal features of ‘shared text’ is not seen as an individualized and therefore potentially face-threatening act.

### *Getting the message across is key*

While the participants are not seen to be overly concerned with linguistic purism or grammatical formality in their discussion, they do maintain a strong focus on ‘getting the message across’ to each other as well as external addressees. This means that to the extent that language regulation is in evidence in the data, it overwhelmingly concerns the regulation of *meaning* in language, rather than form. This can be gleaned from several of the extracts which have been discussed so far, and is further illustrated in Extract 6.

#### Extract 6

1     Jesper   that's like the sh- most shitty (0.8) sentence (0.2)  
2             ~~I~~ think it is~~I~~  
3             but basically that's what we wanna do right  
4             something like that

This contribution, which can be seen to conclude the group's attempt at formulating their problem, arguably sums up the complex stance that Jesper and the others have been building up throughout the sequence: the exact phrasing of 'the problem' may not (yet) live up to desirable standards (hence it can be described as 'the most shitty sentence'), but it nevertheless 'does the job' because it encapsulates what the group members have agreed that they 'wanna do'.

A similar emphasis on function over form is in evidence in Extract 5. As we saw above, the correction of a grammatical 'mistake' (*does* vs *do*) appears relatively mundane, but things are very different when it comes to phrasing the research question in an accurate manner. This is evidenced in the way the exchange develops after the grammatical mistake has been amended:

#### Extract 5, extended

1     Jesper   should I try to put it like this (1.5)  
2             ((MAR and LOU talking to each other throughout))  
3     Ernst    does the five  
4             (0.5)  
5             do the five not does the five  
6     Jesper   oh yeah that's ~~right~~  
7             do the five concepts work and will (1.2)  
8     Ernst    arr:::: ar arr  
9     Jesper   no not  
10    Ernst    based on the students' experience  
11             (3.1)  
12    Ernst    ne- er no no no  
13             we cannot base on the students' experience  
14             whether they work or not  
15    Jesper   no no no no no (.) no no no  
16             that's not what I'm saying  
17    Ernst    whether they believe in it I would call it  
18             or whether whether they (0.7)  
19             yeah (1.4)  
20             whether they (0.7)  
21    Jesper   why is it a problem to say if it works or not

The way that Ernst and Jesper engage in the discussion from line 8 onwards is markedly different from the relatively disinterested way they attend to the grammatical issue in lines 3 to 6. By



blatantly and emphatically displaying their disagreement ('ne- er no no no', line 12; 'no no no no no no no no no no no no no', line 15) they clearly indicate that something worth investing in is at stake here. It is obviously not *unimportant* to them what is written on the board, but they are primarily concerned with the substance, not the form.

On the basis of the data discussed so far, it might be tempting to suggest that the participants, Jesper and Ernst in particular, are willing to disregard formal and aesthetic aspects of the text as long as it 'does the job' that it is supposed to do. However, as I have already implied above, it is not necessarily as simple as that. After the group members have agreed on the preliminary version of the problem formulation on the whiteboard, Jesper and Ernst proceed to producing a version on Ernst's laptop, slightly amending the text as they go. As part of this process Jesper in particular displays an orientation towards normative constraints in operation beyond the sphere of the group. This is illustrated in three segments from the very end of the sequence which I have edited together here as Extract 7 to save space.

#### Extract 7

1	Ernst	okay (0.3)
2	Jesper	it's fine like that we'll talk about it later on
3		but it's just so that we 'don't forget'
4	Ernst	based on the
5		students' experience how are the give concepts working
6		in which (0.5)
((10 seconds omitted))		
7	Ernst	er ≈
8	Jesper	≈ to (0.3)
9	Ernst	to which extent does the ideal execution
10		and the real execution of the five concepts (0.3)
11	Jesper	erm
12		er fo- er (0.5)
13		function or something like that arh so bad
14		crappy words (0.7)
((10 seconds omitted))		
15	Ernst	alright (0.3)
16		I'm loading it up to the
17		'BSCW'
18	Jesper	yeah load it up we'll talk about it
19		later on we have to but (0.7)
20		but but er we probably have to change that somehow

In these excerpts, Jesper is quite clearly doing a lot of work around the status of the text, positioning it as good enough for now, but in need of further work at a later stage: He asserts that ‘it’s fine like that’ (line 2) but continues by saying that they will need to ‘talk about it later on’ (line 2); he talks about ‘crappy words’ (line 14) but agrees with Ernst that the text can be uploaded as is to the group’s file sharing space (called BSCW), and then ‘we’ll talk about it’, predicting that ‘later on ... we probably have to change that somehow’ (lines 18-20).

## Discussion

The analysis presented above suggests that the practice of language regulation in collaborative student writing and its language ideological underpinnings is a highly complex and multifaceted affair. Since the analysis is based on a single case, it is not possible to suggest generalizations. However, in the following I would like to discuss the central points which have emerged from the analysis and relate them to similar studies in the literature by way of illustrating their potential wider relevance. I conclude the article by linking the discussion to debates at the interface of language ideology and language policy in the context of university internationalisation.

Looking at the sequence analyzed above, it is evident that collaborative writing for this group is a multilingual process. In arriving at a shared understanding of their project through discussion – a process which constitutes a precondition for formulating their problem in writing – the participants liberally draw on the variety of linguistic resources at their disposal, freely combining them in syncretic ways, apparently without regard for more purist notions of languages as distinct codes. Their approach to spoken language is thus indicative of a distinct non-monolingual language ideology. Unlike the practices Salö (2015) has observed among researchers in Sweden where the use of languages other than Swedish, English in particular, is felt to be an unpleasant anomaly in spoken interaction (but not in writing for publication where English reigns supreme), the group has developed a multilingual linguistic *modus operandi* which is distinct from the practices in the surrounding society. It is important to note, however, that the language ideological orientation that the students display should not be seen to constitute a fixed arrangement. It is a socially established and contextually contingent state of affairs which may be considered characteristic of the type of multilingual transient social congregation that student project groups at international study programs exemplify (cf. Mortensen 2017), but which the participants do not necessarily subscribe to in other contexts.

The contextual malleability of language ideological orientations is visible even within the context of the group itself, particularly in the different orientations which the participants display towards spoken and written language respectively. As argued in the analysis, while the group's spoken practices are multilingual, for the purposes of writing they exclusively use English in this context. This may suggest that their language ideological orientations are to some extent medium specific – different norms seem to apply to spoken vs. written language. As Kristiansen points out, 'it is generally accepted that the linguistic conventions that apply to writing differ significantly from those which apply to spoken language' (2015: 257), so to find this difference in the data is perhaps not all that surprising. Still, it is nevertheless important to point out that the difference is in fact there – implicitly displayed by the participants through their actions rather than explicitly formulated as a policy – if we want to build a comprehensive understanding of the sociolinguistics of writing, in this case specifically collaborative writing in a university context characterized by transnational mobility. From a learning perspective, it seems relevant to consider whether the seemingly 'automatic' preference for English when it comes to (collaborative) writing is in fact preferable, or whether the practice of using multiple languages in spoken interaction might come with certain benefits also for (some kinds of) writing.

As indicated in the analysis, the preference for English as a monolingual code in writing may be premised on a consideration of the future 'audience' and certain institutional expectations associated with written language. The findings of the analysis can in this respect be said to resemble studies conducted by Cogo (2016) in multilingual companies, in which she finds a contradiction between company internal 'backstage' practices, characterised by relative linguistic diversity and flexibility, and 'frontstage' activities, characterised by more purist language ideologies. What we see is a certain expectation that in producing language with the intention of communicating beyond the immediate situation, a more 'standard' approach to language is called for, including the use of a single code, in this case English. In theorising this multiplicity of normative orientations in the data, it is useful to invoke Blommaert's (2010) notion of "polycentricity" (cf. the discussion in Stæhr 2016). In a comment that resonates with Bell's notion of referee design, Blommaert notes that 'we often project the presence of an evaluating authority through our interactions with immediate addressees, we behave *with reference to* such an evaluative authority, and I submit we call such an evaluating authority a "centre"' (2010: 39).

Arguably it is a change in ‘normative center’, from a group-internal one to a group-external one, which prompts the group to use English for their writing products.

A similar effect is discernable in the way the group members orient to norms related to English, as opposed to norms regarding language choice. As shown in the analysis, Jesper expresses great dissatisfaction with the exact phrasing of the group’s ‘problem’ towards the end of the meeting (Extract 6). While he has been struggling to find the exact words before this too, it is arguably the change in norm center associated with the typing up and sharing of the formulation via the group’s file sharing service which increasingly leads him to evaluate the language use in the final formulation critically, even though he is displaying satisfaction with the content. This showcases a familiar tension between a utilitarian appreciation of local norms and a concern with idealized, non-local norms. In many ways, the group members are displaying an attitude that matches what Seidlhofer (2011) might call ‘ELF *users*’ as opposed to ‘English *language learners*’. As users of English as a lingua franca, they are concerned with getting the message across, not so much with the form of language. Yet, this is only one side of the story because we also see that the participants, given the right contextual conditions, display an orientation premised on exonormative ideas about what constitutes ‘proper English’. This double orientation is comparable to the findings of Mortensen and Fabricius (2014) discussed in the beginning of the article and also resonates with Hynninen’s (2016) and Karakaş’ (2015) findings.

Kristiansen (2015) argues that what I refer to as an exonormative orientation to ‘proper English’ is discernable already in the way group members propose formulations for written text by means of ‘writing aloud voice’ (WAV) sequences. In other words, an orientation to group-external language norms for written language is present even before actual writing happens. In Figure 2, I have tried to distinguish some of the central steps involved in the process of collaborative writing seen as a gradual and iterative process of the entextualisation of ideas. What is interesting to note here is that each step, in the case of the group investigated here, seems to be accompanied by slight changes in normative footing, or what we might call changes in the regime of language regulation. The ‘discussion’ phase is characterized by relatively flexible multilingual practices which are gradually replaced by more ‘strict’ regulative regimes as the members move towards producing written text, first via WAV sequences, then by writing drafts on the white board, and finally typing them up on the laptop for wider dissemination.

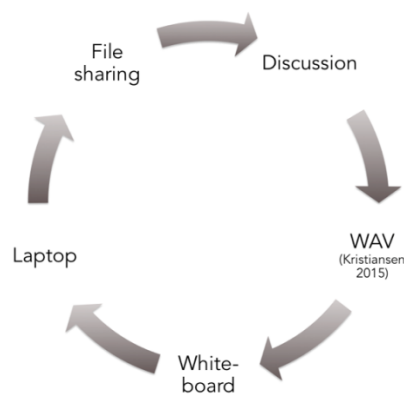


Figure 2: The entextualisation of ideas in group's process of collaborative writing

What is perhaps most remarkable about the data discussed is the extent to which the participants are able to navigate these waters, without having been given – and without giving – any explicit directions.

### **Concluding remarks: Implications for language policy**

In closing this article, I would like to link the analysis and discussion presented above to wider debates at the interface of language ideology and language policy in the context of university internationalization in Denmark. Language policies at Danish universities, and Nordic universities more generally, currently tend to be based on the notion of ‘parallel language use’, in which the local language is mandated to be used in parallel with English as the international language. It is, however, unclear what ‘parallel language use’ entails in practice. Is the data discussed in this article an example of ‘parallel language use’? Perhaps. It depends on how the notion is defined, which tends to vary quite a lot (cf. Hult and Källkvist 2016), but it is certainly not parallel language use in the *popular* understanding of the term in which it is used to refer to the separate and non-syncretic use of two languages – the local language and English side by side in splendid isolation. The data clearly show that language practices ‘on the ground’ are much less clear-cut. That, however, is not the same as saying that the practices are unregulated. In fact, the language policy-in-practice displayed by the students under study here is indicative of a quite impressive ability on their part to navigate in a complex and multilayered ‘system’ of evaluative regimes (Lillis 2013) concerning writing as process as well as product. It may, however, be considered somewhat unfortunate that students are often left to their own devices in working out how they can make the most of the fact that they are students in a multilingual learning

environment. Rather than being presented with abstract notions of ‘parallel language use’ students and teachers at ‘international’ study programmes would probably be better helped if they were given tools that would allow them to develop a reflexive awareness concerning the potential benefits of working within a multilingual learning environment (cf. Fabricius, Mortensen and Haberland 2017). Do jointly produced written products, for instance, at all stages of the process of writing, *have* to be in English at programmes? Why/why not? What is gained by this approach, and what may be lost? Questions like these should arguably be the topic of continuous critical reflection at international university programmes, and as part of that process it might be fruitful to critically examine some of the ‘default’ language ideological assumptions concerning English that are currently dominating international university education (and other societal domains) in many parts of the world, and which we arguably see refracted in the language regulation practices enacted by the students in the case examined in this article.

### Transcription conventions

Timed pause	(0.3)
Micro pause	(.)
Overlap markers top	[ 1
Overlap markers bottom	1 ]
Transcriber unsure	?perso-?
Unclear	xxx
Louder	ⓈhahaⓈ
Latching	≈
Elongation	:::
<i>Italics on the right</i>	paraphrase of non-English words

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The article has benefited from insightful comments and suggestions made by Niina Hynninen, two anonymous reviewers, and Hartmut Haberland. I am immensely grateful to them all. Tusind tak. Any remaining shortcomings remain my responsibility.

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<sup>1</sup> Kristiansen (2017) uses different pseudonyms for the group members (Louise=Sif, Marie=Ann, Jesper=Lars, Ernst=Jens).